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**Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding: Oshkosh Hearing
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I am Marcia Engen, and I reside in Appleton. I have attended hearings in Milwaukee and De Pere, however, this is the first, and only, time I will testify.

After listening to the comments at prior hearings, I feel obligated to speak up for public education because as a young girl, I wanted to go to college but my parents couldn't afford it.

Thankfully, my small town public high school stepped forward and did what my parents couldn't or didn't know how to do. The principal arranged for people from the regional state college to meet me at my high school. Later I learned that a college benefactor I met that day had awarded me a \$95 scholarship (it seemed like a million dollars back then) and from there, my state college guided and watched over me until I received my long desired college degree.

I am a proud, retired public school teacher. Throughout my 39 year career I was recognized as a professional. In the three communities where I was a teacher, I was treated with respect and encouraged to continue my education which ultimately led to a masters degree.

In retirement, my commitment to public education continues, because I am convinced public education in Wisconsin is sitting on a precipice which has been strategically chipped away over time.

Decades ago Wisconsin was regarded as one of the premier states in the nation for innovation in public education. Now, after biennial budget cuts and regressive legislation, Wisconsin has school districts/communities being forced to pass numerous referenda to maintain their schools, poach teachers from neighboring school districts, and seek emergency licenses for unqualified individuals to fill their classrooms. When did we vote to have Wisconsin Forward be changed to Wisconsin Backward?

Some ideas:

- **Stop** dumbing down our public schools and universities! We must maintain or improve degree requirements to become a teacher (and I am not referring to 98.6 degrees).
- **Respect** public school teachers with your words and your actions. Tim Cook, Apple, recently stated, "Our perspective is teachers are jewels". He gets it!
- **Increase** state funding so public schools have the resources to hire the intelligent, creative and committed college of education graduates that Wisconsin's 860,000 public school children deserve.
- **Restore** full bargaining rights for public school teachers and employees to improve morale. Staff morale is a question often asked at board of education candidate forums.
- **Follow** our state constitution, Article X. *The legislature shall provide by law for the establishment of district schools, which shall be as nearly uniform as practicable; and such schools shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years; and no sectarian instruction shall be allowed therein...*
- **Halt** the public school voucher program and return those diverted funds to public schools and the students they serve.
- **Watch** the 'state public education dominoes' in action: West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Arizona, Kansas, Colorado, Texas...will a domino named Wisconsin join the line up?

Thank you for holding these hearings and listening to those of us who advocate for quality Wisconsin public schools.